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“Value not virtual”

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**"VALUE NOT VIRTUAL -
ONE LIBRARY'S RESPONSE TO THE VIRTUAL CAMPUS"**

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Deakin University - in context

Deakin University was created in 1977, as a regional Victorian university based in Geelong, and it has been serving off-campus students since its inception. Today, it has six campuses: three in Melbourne, two in Geelong, and one in Warrnambool. There is 350 km between the furthest campuses and it still retains its regional roots despite the strong presence in Melbourne since the merger with Victoria College.

Deakin University has developed an outstanding reputation for providing tertiary opportunities for students who, for a variety of reasons, do not wish to study in an on-campus mode. Deakin has been named "University of the Year" twice, in 1995 and again in 1999. The 1995 award was for Deakin's innovative use of information technology to support undergraduate teaching programs. The Library was highlighted in the citation as an excellent service provider, especially in regard to the services to off-campus students. The 1999 award recognised Deakin's productive partnerships with corporations, government departments and professional associations, providing life-long learning opportunities to employees and members. The 40,000 students involved in these partnerships all study remotely from the traditional university campus.

Deakin University's first Vice-Chancellor stated, "University policy is to minimize the differences between on-campus and off-campus students. However, we did *not* adapt on-campus courses for off-campus use. On the contrary, we proceeded the other way round." [1] This ethos has filtered throughout the University, particularly to the Library, which endeavours to provide inclusive services, where at all possible, so any student or academic staff member, regardless of location or disability, can access the wealth of information available from the Library.

The Guiding Philosophies of Deakin University Library

All library services are based on three basic philosophies that make Deakin University Library very distinctive. It has a strong user focus. The overarching purpose of the Library is summed up in its motto "***We help people learn.***" If a policy or procedure detracts from a student's ability to learn, changes are made. If a user need can be fulfilled in a more effective way, new or modified services are implemented, depending if funds are available, of course.

Another guiding principle is the concept that students have rights. Translated into the Library's services, all students, regardless of mode of study (on-campus or off-campus), have the right to expect a similar level of library service and support. Therefore, the Library aims to ensure that remote students have similar opportunities to ask reference inquiries, borrow books, obtain journal articles, and receive information literacy training so as to undertake independent research as do on-campus students. Deakin University Library has been servicing

"virtual" students since 1977, long before the concept of the virtual campus was envisaged with the help of technology.

The final philosophy is that students should not be "taxed" for being good library users. This is particularly important for off-campus students who are not charged the direct cost of postage or courier services used to deliver loans of books or photocopies. Off-campus students have enough barriers to tertiary education to overcome without being penalised for being avid readers or diligent students. The cost incurred by remote students in accessing library services are kept to the forefront, with web page design, for example, taking into account bandwidth considerations and software and hardware standards.

Library User Value Statements

Deakin University Library has an enviable reputation for providing services to remote (and virtual) students. One reason that the Library retains this reputation is that it seeks regular feedback from library users on the services they require. Inside the University, the Library enjoys the position of the most valued service provider within the university community, based on regular surveys of staff and students. These accolades do not come by accident. Regular, formal workshops with users and stakeholders, facilitated by external consultants, provide the input to developing the Library's strategic and operational plans. These plans result in the delivery of the services identified by users, so that the Library can "help people learn".

As a result of the feedback over a period of two years, the Library developed "Library User Value Statements", which articulate those services of the Library that really add value to the customer's experience. Five value statements were prepared reflecting the needs of the multiple market segments and stakeholders that a university library serves. The statements refer to students, off-campus students, researchers, staff and the University executive and can be found at <http://www.deakin.edu.au/library/luvs.html>, as well as on printed Library brochures and service guides. The statements address the group concerned and are written in a style that emphasises the strong customer focus of the library.

STUDENTS - to help you learn, we will strive to provide

Resources

- enough copies of textbooks
- access to high demand material
- a range of electronic resources

Staff

- who are well trained and knowledgeable who offer friendly, helpful service

Easy Access

- via a catalogue which is comprehensive and reliable
- to materials on the shelves
- which is convenient and equitable

Environment

- which is comfortable and conducive to study which has enough furniture and equipment

OFF CAMPUS STUDENTS - to help you learn, we will strive to provide

Resources

- enough copies of textbooks
- access to high demand material
- a range of electronic resources

Staff

- who are well trained and knowledgeable
- who offer friendly, helpful service

Access & Delivery

- which is convenient to you
- which is fast, reliable and responsive which is equitable to all users